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Managing Multiple Goals in Real Learning Contexts

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Abstract

Understanding students' multiple goals in real learning contexts is an emerging area of importance for educators and researchers investigating student motivation in classrooms. This qualitative study conducted over an academic year investigates the multiple goals articulated by seven, 11 year old students and explores relationships between goals and changes in goals during the year. Findings show students pursue a range of related academic and social goals over time and that goals can be complementary and dynamic. The significance of multiple goals is emphasised as goals are shown to be complex, dynamic, and pursued simultaneously in real learning contexts.

Keywords : motivation, multiple goals, academic goals, social goals, adolescence.

1. Introduction

Understanding the multiple goals pursued by students in real learning contexts is an emerging area of importance for educators and researchers investigating student motivation in classrooms. From a goal theory perspective (Ames, 1992) research has investigated achievement goals (Elliot, 1999; Kaplan, Middleton, Urdan, & Midgley, 2002) and social goals (Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1991a), however, the majority of studies focus on individual goals in isolation. Acknowledging that goals in real learning situations do not operate in isolation, recent research has sought to further develop understandings about goals by investigating the multiple goals individuals pursue in learning contexts (Boekaerts, de Koning, & Vedder, 2006; Lemos & Goncalves, 2004; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2001; Wosnitza & Volet, 2009). Research using a multiple goals perspective is currently valuable in progressing understandings about motivation goals, by acknowledging that goals operate as complex, dynamic systems in real learning situations.

Although a range of goals has been identified in the literature, there are still questions emerging about why students pursue particular goals and the relationship between academic and social goals. Might students strive to learn to attain approval from others, or maintain membership to particular peer groups? Might the desire to attain high marks be underpinned by a desire to meet parental expectations? Furthermore, the reasons students give for wanting to achieve academically reflect the complex range of goals that contribute to students' motivation in learning contexts. Dowson and McInerney (2003), for example, show how students' multiple goals are reflected in statements about why they pursue particular goals and argue that multiple goals may interact in conflicting, converging and compensatory ways. The importance of investigating the reasons students give for pursuing achievement goals has also been acknowledged by Urdan and Mestas (2006) who contend that exploring the "different goals behind performance goals" illustrates "achievement goals may be more

complex and multidimensional than often depicted in research, and this complexity warrants further attention” (p. 364). Understanding the complexity of students’ multiple goals has become an emerging theme in motivation research.

Another recent theme in motivation research has been the relative stability or otherwise of goals over time (see for example, Corpus, McClintic-Gilbert, & Hayenga, 2009; Fryer & Elliot, 2007). While studies show that goals can change much of this research relies on survey measures which capture ‘snapshots’ of students’ goals over a particular period of time and may not allow participants the opportunity to explain factors that have contributed to change or stability of goals. Exploring how and why goals may change over time is valuable both to develop theoretical understandings about goals and to understand the dynamics of multiple goal pursuit.

Much research on student motivation has utilised survey measures to draw conclusions about students’ goals and relationships between goals. This approach has significantly advanced understandings about goals, however, studies using qualitative measures can further develop understandings through ‘unpacking’ layers of complexity of goals and exploring how goals operate in real learning contexts. With the recent increased discussion about the value of examining motivation in real learning contexts (Volet & Järvelä, 2001) investigating why multiple goals are salient for individuals and the stability of goals over time using qualitative methods will further enhance understandings of student motivation in classrooms.

The primary aim of this paper is to examine the motivation goals pursued by seven students over a school year, explore why particular goals are salient, investigate relationships between goals and goal pursuit over time. Goals are defined as the academic and/or social purposes

students perceive for wanting to achieve in learning situations (Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Urdan & Maehr, 1995). Using a longitudinal design, data gathering data over an entire academic year is used to address the following three research questions.

1. What motivational goals are pursued by students during a school year and why are these goals salient?
2. What associations exist between academic and social goals?
3. How do students manage goals over time?

The main contribution of this paper is it addresses some of the recurring questions about why students pursue particular (and multiple) goals and the extent to which goals remain stable or become dynamic over time. A further contribution is use of a qualitative approach to investigate relationships between goals for students in real learning contexts.

2. Goal Theory

Goals have been defined as the mental representations of desired outcomes that initiate and direct behaviour (Austin & Vancouver, 1996) and motivation research has investigated students' goals with regard to academic achievement, i.e. achievement goals (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988), and the content of goals pursued in learning situations (Ford & Nichols, 1987; Lemos, 1996; Wentzel, 2000). Achievement goals have focused on *why* students want to achieve in learning situations, whereas, a goal content perspective focuses on *what* students are trying to achieve in learning situations. Even though goal research has been prolific over the last 20 years, few studies have considered the range of goals (including *what* students are trying to achieve at school and *why* they want to achieve academically) that are relevant to adolescents in real learning situations and how these goals may be related.

According to goal theory, the motivation students have towards engaging in activities is directed by a complex set of goals (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Urdan, Kneisel, & Mason, 1999) including academic and social goals. Students' multiple goals has been a feature of some research (Pintrich, 2000; Smith & Sinclair, 2005; Wentzel, 1992), although much of the focus in goal research has concerned single goals, in particular, achievement goals.

2.1. Achievement goals.

Achievement goals have been defined as reasons, or purposes, individuals perceive for achieving (Ames, 1992; Urdan & Mestas, 2006). Mastery and performance goals have dominated goal theory research over the last 20 years with mastery goals reflecting students' desire to develop competence and performance goals typically reflecting students' desire to either demonstrate high levels of competence relative to others, or avoid demonstrating low levels of competence. Definitions of performance goals have also included demonstration of competence through attainment of certain marks or grades (for example, Dowson & McInerney, 2003). Some researchers have argued that exclusive attention to mastery and performance goals constrain and limit opportunities for investigation of the multidimensional nature of goals and relationships between goals (McInerney & Ali, 2006). Other authors claim that when performance goals result in adaptive outcomes, it may be because they are working in complementary ways with mastery goals (Pintrich, 2000) and that the effects of multiple achievement goals have not been thoroughly examined (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001).

2.2. *Work avoidance and extrinsic goals.*

Early goal research suggested students also pursue work avoidance and extrinsic goals. Work avoidance goals typically describe students' desire to complete work with minimal effort or doing enough work to 'get by' (Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985). Recent studies show students do articulate work avoidance goals (Dowson & McInerney, 2003), yet this goal remains relatively unexplored.

Extrinsic goals involve a desire to obtain rewards for academic effort or to avoid undesirable consequences such as punishment for poor behaviour or achievement (Patrick, Ryan, & Pintrich, 1999). While some studies show extrinsic goals are related to avoidance behaviours such as self-handicapping (Midgley & Urdan, 2001), cheating (E. M. Anderman & Midgley, 2004), and avoidance of help-seeking (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), other research shows that extrinsic goals can positively influence academic efficacy, self-regulated learning and reduce handicapping (Freeman, Gutman, & Midgley, 2002). Investigating the role of these goals in motivation is ongoing.

2.3. *Social goals*

Classrooms are inherently social places where the nature and relative success of social interactions has an impact on motivation and achievement. Not surprisingly, researchers have explored the role of social goals in student motivation (Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996; Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1991a). Social goals have been considered from an achievement goal perspective, i.e. the social reasons students have for wanting to achieve at school (L.H. Anderman, 1999b; L. H. Anderman & Anderman, 1999; Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Horst, Finney, & Barron, 2007) and from a broader content perspective (Wentzel, 2000) which

acknowledges that students' social goals may or may not be related to achievement. For example, adolescents may pursue social relationship goals by wishing to form close interpersonal relationships with others and this may or may not impact on their achievement. Nevertheless, it represents an important goal for students at school.

Social goals can have a significant impact on students' motivation and engagement (Patrick, Anderman, & Ryan, 2002; Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1991b). A range of social goals have been identified, including relationships (building/maintaining inter-personal relationships), approval (gaining approval of significant others), responsibility (achieving academically due to sense of responsibility to others), status (maintaining/attaining social position in school and/or later life) and concern (assisting others in their development) (Dowson & McInerney, 2003). Although there have been differences in definitions of social goals there is overwhelming support regarding the significance of social goals in relation to motivation and achievement. Dowson and McInerney (2001) argue social goals "may actually be more salient and predictive of students' global motivation and achievement than either mastery and performance goals" (p. 40) and mastery and performance goals may be dependent on effective pursuit of social goals.

2.4. Goal changes

Research has also investigated goal stability and change. Because goals are influenced by both personal characteristics and characteristics of learning environments, it would seem reasonable that goals may change as individuals mature and as they participate in different learning contexts. Individuals also regulate goals (Bandura, 1986) and so monitor, evaluate and revise goals where appropriate. Senko and Harackiewicz (2005) argue that individuals may either *intensify* or *switch* goals, depending on feedback and evaluation of goals. The

research on goal change has typically used quantitative measures and focused on achievement goals (Fryer & Elliot, 2007; Pajares & Cheong, 2003; Shim, Ryan, & Anderson, 2008) and little has currently been reported about stability and change in social and multiple goals.

2.5. Multiple goals

Research investigating multiple goals (Boekaerts, de Koning, & Vedder, 2006; Lemos & Goncalves, 2004; Pintrich, 2000; Wentzel, 1992; Wosnitza & Volet, 2009) has made a significant contribution to understandings about motivation and achievement, particularly over the last 10 years. For example, with regard achievement goals, dual pursuit of mastery and performance approach goals is positively linked to academic achievement (Pintrich, 2000), self-regulation and self-efficacy (Smith & Sinclair, 2005). Mastery goals have also been positively related to social goals such as friendship (Levy-Tossman, Kaplan, & Assor, 2007) and responsibility (L. H. Anderman & Anderman, 1999) while performance goals have been associated with endorsement of relationship and status goals (L. H. Anderman & Anderman, 1999). Even so, how social and academic domains interact to influence students' achievement still needs further research. Anderman (1999a) argues the “reciprocity of these domains has received little attention. Understanding how these domains interact remains a challenge for future research” (p. 305).

Researchers have considered hierarchical organisation of goals where particular goals provide direction for other goals. Boekaerts, de Koning, and Vedder (2006), for example, contend that goals are hierarchical, with higher order goals ('I want to be' goals) giving direction to action programs ('do' goals) and scripts. Wentzel (2000) claims that students' goals in academic and social domains may be hierarchically and causally associated. For example, students' goals may form Social → Task hierarchies when students aim to seek

approval from teachers in the belief this will lead to academic gains. Likewise, Task → Social hierarchies are illustrated when students aim to do well so as to attain parental or teacher approval. Dowson and McInerney (2003) argue that multiple academic and social goals can act in complementary, converging or conflicting ways to influence motivation and achievement and that “student motivation should be conceptualised as a process of managing multiple goals” (p. 108).

Although the existing literature provides converging evidence of the importance of investigating multiple goals to develop further understandings about motivation and achievement, much of the research concerning multiple goals has used quantitative measures, establishing goal relationships through correlations. While this approach has been useful in revealing relationships between goals using large samples, limitations such as providing wording for students and only investigating pre-determined, researcher-identified ideas, mean that survey measures have not been able to provide holistic depictions of students’ goals in learning contexts. In addition, survey methods can only provide ‘snapshots’ of students’ goals at particular points in time which fail to explore the nuances of why goals may remain stable or change. Studies using qualitative techniques such as interviews (e.g. Lemos, 1996; Levy, Kaplan, & Patrick, 2004; MacCallum, 2001), however, have the advantage of being able to provide more in-depth perspectives about motivation. Gathering data through individual interviews, this study describes the spontaneously articulated goals of adolescents, explores the relationships between these goals and investigates if, how and why goals may change over time.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants were seven 11 and 12 year old students (2 male; 5 female) attending a co-educational school in an economically and ethnically diverse West Australian metropolitan area. Due to proximity to a university a small number of International Students from Indonesia attended the school. Two students (1 male; 1 female) were from Asian backgrounds, one being an International Student. Participants volunteered to be involved in the study and parents/guardians consented to student interviews during school time throughout an academic year (February to December).

3.2. Interviews

As the research questions require development of in-depth understandings about students' goals, semi-structured individual interviews conducted over a 10 month period were used to gather data. The key advantage of using interviews in this study was enabling understandings about motivation to be developed and explored from the participants' points of view (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews provided opportunities for students to describe goals in their own words, explain why goals were important and reflect on possible changes in goals over time. In addition, use of probing questions facilitated rich detailed responses and opportunities to discuss the meaning of participants' experiences and beliefs in the context of motivation and goals. A further advantage was that over the 10 month period, a relationship of trust developed between the interviewer and interviewee, resulting in more elaborate responses to questions.

Students participated in eight interviews, conducted at regular intervals during the year. Interviews lasted from 20-45 minutes (depending on the length of students' explanations) and were conducted in an interview room with the main researcher. An average of approximately 4.5 hours of data per student was audio taped for transcribing.

During interviews students were asked questions regarding their goals at school and why these goals were important. (See Appendix A for the list of questions used to generate discussion about students' goals.) Across the interviews, questions about goals were intentionally recurring to improve reliability of data and to enable confirmation of goals or to generate discussion about goal change. Questions in interviews 1-3 focused on verifying students' achievement goals (e.g. "Do you want to do well at school? Why?") and probing as to why these goals were important (e.g. "Why is it important to you that ... you improve your understanding / you get high marks", etc). Questions also explored broader goals (e.g. "What other things are important for you at school? Why?") and social goals (e.g. "Does having friends at school help your achievement? Why?"). Questions were also posed to gain insight into factors influencing students' goals (e.g. "What expectations do your parents have for you at school?" "Is academic achievement important to your friends? Why?" "In your class is it more important to understand and improve or to get high marks? Why?").

The range of goals expressed by the group of students in interviews 1-3 was used to generate goal statements (see Table 1) for an activity in interview 4. The purpose of the activity was to confirm students' goals through a 'hands-on' procedure, using concrete visual aids to stimulate discussion. Goal statements were written on cards and shown to students in groups of three (for student manageability). Students were asked to select cards containing statement(s) they strongly agreed with and then explain why they had chosen particular cards. The data from this interview activity both confirmed and elaborated on goals previously articulated.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Interviews 5-8 investigated stability of goals over time. The main researcher reminded students of goals they had previously articulated and asked if those goals remained the same (e.g. “At the beginning of the year you said that you wanted to do well at school because ... Is that still the case? Why/why not?”). Students were asked about possible goal change in three interviews (June, September and November) to both improve the reliability of data and to allow opportunities to discuss goal change over a six month period. The specific questions used to explore possible goal changes are noted as (*RQ3*) in Appendix A. In the final interview students were reminded of goals they had articulated at the beginning of the year and asked if those goals remained the same.

3.3. Data analysis

Data analysis occurred in four phases using a mixed inductive and deductive content analysis approach. Analyses occurred during, and post data collection.

3.3.1. Phase 1.

After interviews 1-3, the main researcher (in collaboration with a colleague) analysed each interview for statements students made about goals, i.e. academic and/or social purposes

for wanting to achieve at school. Data from interviews 1-3 was used to identify and define academic and social goals, considering both goals identified in the literature and allowing for other goals to emerge. This analysis informed the activity used in interview 4.

3.3.2. Phase 2.

At the conclusion of data collection the main researcher identified 146 text units across all interviews where students described their goals. Text units (student descriptions or explanations related to one main idea) included statements about single goals (86 text units) and multiple goals (60 text units). Between 20 and 22 text units were coded for each student (Natalie – 20, Jessica – 20, Anita – 22, Stephanie – 22, Jeremy – 21, Brett – 20, Sophia – 21). Using the goals previously identified by the main researcher plus an additional category of ‘other goals’ (‘other’ purposes for wanting to achieve at school), three independent judges read and coded three interviews from each student (a total of 36 text units). After initial coding (with interjudge reliability 78%, i.e. full agreement between three judges on coding for 28/36 text units) coding categories were refined and goal definitions clarified by mutual agreement (see Table 2 for final coding categories). The remaining text units were then coded by each of the three judges who had full initial agreement on 71% of the data. After resolving differences through discussion, the final interjudge reliability between the three judges for single and multiple goals across all data was 85%.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

3.3.3. Phase 3.

Phase 3 involved specific analysis of the 60 text units which had been coded with more than one goal, i.e. where students had articulated multiple goals. Because the second research question of the study focuses on investigating associations between academic and social goals, judges looked for associations between academic and social goals and then associations between other goals that emerged in the coding. Associations were identified where students had described goals as being dependent on, or related to each other (i.e. if I improve in my learning then I will achieve high marks – mastery and performance goals). Using frequencies, the most common goal associations were identified, those being mastery and performance goals (16 text units, 27%), mastery and social goals (13 text units, 22%), performance and extrinsic goals (12 text units, 20%), performance and social goals (8 text units, 13%), work avoidance and extrinsic goals (7 text units, 12%), work avoidance and social goals (4 text units, 6%).

3.3.4. Phase 4.

Finally, individual student cases were analysed to ascertain goal changes over time. Once students' goals were confirmed in interview 4, these goals were compared with those articulated in June ("At the beginning of the year you said you wanted to do well at school because ... is this still the case?"), September ("Do you think you have the same goals now as you had at the beginning of the year? Why/Why not?") and November ("At the beginning of the year you hoped that ... how do you feel about that now?"). The goals each student articulated in interviews were charted in a matrix showing students' goals and month of interview. Interview transcripts were analysed to help explain why goals remained stable or why changes had occurred.

4. Results

4.1. *What goals are pursued by students?*

Coding of the 86 text units containing single goal statements revealed the academic and social goals students articulated, as shown in Table 3. The frequencies shown represent the percentage of text units describing each goal. Academic goals included mastery (14%), performance (20%), and work avoidance (8%). It is worth noting, however, that only one student (Anita) described performance goals with social comparison, i.e. the desire to outperform others. Social goals included relationships (13%), approval (10%), responsibility (3%), status (7%) and concern goals (5%). Students also described extrinsic goals (20%) – wanting to achieve to strive for rewards or avoid punishments.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

4.1.2. *Why do students pursue these goals?*

When asked why students pursued particular academic goals, for example to learn new things or to achieve good marks, students described other related goals including academic, social goals and extrinsic goals. The 60 text units containing multiple goal statements, revealed associations between mastery and performance goals (16 text units, 27%), mastery and social goals (13 text units, 22%), performance and extrinsic goals (12 text

units, 20%), performance and social goals (8 text units, 13%) and work avoidance and extrinsic goals (7 text units, 12%), work avoidance and social goals (4 text units, 6%).

The following sections report the data illustrating the associations between academic and social goals as articulated by the students.

4.2.1. Why do students pursue mastery goals?

Initially four students (Jessica, Anita, Stephanie and Jeremy) reported pursuing mastery goals which were associated with other goals, specifically performance goals (16 text units) and social goals (13 text units) including status, responsibility, approval and concern goals.

Mastery goals were associated with performance goals for students who perceived improvement in understanding and investment of effort would assist demonstration of competence through marks.

“If I don’t improve my learning I won’t get good marks.” (Jeremy)

“Only if you work hard will you get the marks.” (Anita)

Mastery goals were also associated with social goals. For example, the desire for improvement and learning was critical to future opportunities (status).

“For me wanting to learn means I want to improve because if I don’t improve it will reflect on the future and I want to learn because I want to have a good future.”

(Jeremy)

“I want to improve in my learning because when I grow older I know that this will come in handy for me when I join the workforce ... if I learn now then it’s better when I grow older.” (Anita)

Developing understanding and competence was also important to meet social responsibility goals, especially for Jeremy and Anita. How students responded to their parents' expectations for improvement and understanding illustrates an association between mastery and responsibility. This meant developing competence for the purpose of meeting family expectations of hard work, effort and improvement.

“Because my parents have always wanted me to study hard and they help me with everything I need. When they were schooling they never had that much opportunity to school ... I want to make them proud of me ... my mum she could have become a doctor or something, but her parents never wanted her to be one, because in India it's just like all the ladies should stay at home and do home things ... she never got the opportunity, otherwise she would have been successful... but now I have the opportunity to be successful.” (Anita)

“My Mum really works day and night, works hard and my father also ... I don't want my mum to think that her works was in vain ... I don't want them to feel that they work for nothing.” (Jeremy)

Mastery goals were also related to social concern goals for Anita who described wanting to understand and achieve to help others.

“I like to help others with their work ... and I realise that when I help them I learn more ... it makes me feel that I know something and I can explain it to them and that means I understand it and that I'm getting better at learning.” (Anita)

Thus assisting other students was both a generous act and one that assisted development and reinforcement of personal understanding and mastery goals.

Mastery goals for these students were therefore related to performance goals and social goals such as status, responsibility, approval and concern.

4.2.2. *Why do students pursue performance goals?*

Students desired demonstrating competence by attaining a particular grade or through high achievement relative to others for four key reasons, namely, to meet extrinsic goals (12 text units) and social goals (8 text units) including parental approval (approval goals) and familial responsibilities (responsibility goals), and to maintain peer relationships (relationship goals).

Students described how attaining high marks may lead to school rewards for which there were often additional rewards at home.

“I might get a new pair of shoes ... I think that if I got it (a reward), it might be pretty impressive.” (Stephanie)

“Sometimes if it’s really good I get take away food that night.” (Natalie)

Only one student, Anita, spoke about performance goals in terms of achievement relative to other students, although the other six students all regularly spoke of the desire to achieve “good marks”. Anita expressed strong ideas about academic achievement and outperforming other students.

“I want to achieve more than other people in the class and I want to be the highest to get good marks in the class... it matters about getting full marks in everything.”

(Anita)

Achieving performance goals through high marks was associated with social goals, particularly responsibility toward the family and her parents who had emigrated from India

five years previously in order to improve educational opportunities for their children. To meet responsibility to parents, Anita desired approval for academic work through striving for extrinsic rewards such as positive diary notes from teachers and awards at assembly.

“I am really hoping I will get an award at the end of the year ... my parents would be pretty pleased with that.” (Anita)

So for Anita, the performance goal of achieving high marks relative to others was associated with extrinsic goals, approval goals and responsibility goals. Likewise for Jeremy, demonstrating high performance was critical to attaining parental approval and meeting family responsibility.

“I don't want my parents to be upset because I haven't done well ... I don't want them to feel they work for nothing.” (Jeremy)

Jeremy was also concerned about social approval and relationships, for which achieving a particular standard of marks was critical.

“My group of friends is really all very smart and I don't want to be left out just because I don't have the requirements of being in their group... I just don't want to feel left out really... I would feel left out if I kept getting low marks.” (Jeremy)

High marks were important to avoid peer disapproval and consequent behaviours such as teasing.

“Lots of students in my class sometimes make fun of me when I get low marks and that really upsets me ... now I really want to get good marks so I can't be teased anymore.” (Jeremy)

Likewise Jessica felt that demonstrating academic competence with peers was important for social relationships and peer inclusion.

“You should know what everyone else is talking about ... like maths and all that ... you really need to know what they are so you can talk about it as well ... so you’re not left out. If someone asks me how to spell a word or something I want to be able to know how to spell it so they don’t tease me or anything.” (Jessica)

In these cases, academic performance goals were associated with extrinsic goals and social goals.

4.2.3. Why do students pursue work avoidance goals?

Four students described work avoidance goals by wanting to complete satisfactory work but with as little effort as possible. This goal was related to other goals, namely extrinsic goals (7 text units) to avoid punishment and relationship goals (4 text units).

For example, doing acceptable work in a minimum amount of time allowed more time for maintaining and building inter-personal relationships.

“If I get my work done quickly and it’s okay, I don’t have to study as hard. So I have more time to get to know my friends.” (Jessica)

Focusing on friendships meant Sophia intentionally maintained a particular level of achievement (when students were placed in ability groups) to remain with friends. So work avoidance goals were influenced by relationship goals here too.

“I’m just trying to do the same level of work I’ve always done. I don’t want to do better because I don’t want her to move me because I’m seated next to a lot of my friends so I can talk a lot.” (Sophia)

Work avoidance goals were also important to avoid possible punishments.

“I just do my work so it’s done and it’s okay ... I’m not going to get into trouble for it.” (Natalie)

“I just do what I can If I do try to stay out of trouble, it’s only for my parents, because they expect it ... because it’s less stress for them.” (Brett)

For Brett and Natalie work avoidance goals were associated with extrinsic avoid goals and parental responsibility and approval goals. Thus completing work satisfactorily meant avoiding punishment at school and therefore avoiding further punishment at home. Extrinsic goals in the classroom context were important in the family context and in this way had a kind of compounding effect.

“I hate it when I get a lecture from my mum about why I didn’t get a good mark ... and I hate getting a lecture from my Dad because it’s so boring. He goes on and on and on and I don’t like it.” (Brett)

“Well I’m grounded this week, and that means no TV, early bed, have my radio taken off me and not allowed to go out or anything.” (Natalie)

Pursuit of work avoidance goals therefore was enhanced by a desire for social relationships and extrinsic goals such as avoiding punishment.

4.3. What other relationships exist between goals?

The previous section shows associations between academic, social and extrinsic goals and illustrates how social and extrinsic goals contributed to pursuit of academic goals. In some statements, however, associations between particular social goals emerged, specifically approval and responsibility goals, status and responsibility goals, and concern and

relationship goals. While the evidence of these relationships is small in terms of coding frequencies, they are worth reporting as they show how goals within the social domain may be associated.

4.3.1. Approval and responsibility goals (3 text units)

While students often spoke of the desire to achieve academically to receive approval from parents and occasionally teachers, these approval goals were connected to responsibility goals. Striving to attain approval from teachers (and possibly receive extrinsic rewards) contributed to being able to fulfil a sense of family responsibility and in turn attain parental approval. For most students goals of responsibility and approval were interconnected in this way.

“I like it when my mum and her fiancé are happy with what I’ve done ... they expect me to do well.” (Natalie)

Approval and responsibility goals were also strongly connected for Jeremy and Anita as parental approval was integral to meeting family responsibility. In these instances it may appear that approval and responsibility goals are somewhat confounded, when parents and families are involved, for example, meeting family responsibilities may encompass desire for approval and vice versa.

4.3.2. Status and responsibility goals (2 text units)

Wanting to do well at school to improve future career and employment opportunities was important to support other goals such as mastery goals as discussed previously. Status goals were also connected to responsibility goals.

“Most parents want their child and cousins to work very hard just to uprise the name of the family which is very good.” (Jeremy)

For Jeremy status goals were important to both immediate and extended family and achieving academically served related goals of attaining future status and family responsibility.

4.3.3. *Concern and relationship goals (3 text units)*

Achieving academically in order to assist others was related to relationship goals for Sophia and Anita.

“Helping others makes me feel good because then I can try to make friends with them.” (Sophia)

“I’ve had to cooperate with them and help them out to get the task done and so I made a friendship with them.” (Anita)

For both students concern goals were associated with relationship goals and showing concern in fact further facilitated relationship goals.

The associations between these goals, as illustrated in the comments made by students suggests that social goals may support one another, so achievement of one goal may assist achievement of another. The confounding of approval and responsibility goals where parents are concerned, however, suggests that these goals may have a stronger reciprocal relationship than other social goals.

4.3.4. *Summary*

In examining multiple goals pursued by students it is evident that what may initially on the surface seem like a single academic goal is related to multiple goals. Consequently, goals do not operate as single entities but rather may be intertwined and support and

complement each other. The interaction between academic, social and extrinsic goals as expressed by students suggests goals may operate cooperatively and that associations between academic and social goals may significantly influence how and why students engage in learning situations.

4.4. How do students manage goals over time?

As already shown, the seven students pursued a range of multiple academic and social goals during the year. For three students, the academic and social goals articulated at the start of the year were the same as those described at the end of the year. For the remaining students, some goals had changed with circumstances and as initial goals became unattainable. For example, four students initially expressed the desire to learn and improve, however, by November only two of these students articulated mastery goals. Likewise, four students described work avoidance goals as their initial goals to achieve good marks became less attainable. The complexity of goal associations for individuals and the potentially changing nature of goals for three students are illustrated below.

Unattainable relationship goals contributed to an intensification of academic goals for Anita whose prime objective was to obtain high marks. Achieving high performance meant focusing on improvement and learning so a mastery focus assisted performance goals. Such strong performance and mastery goals were a result of striving to please parents and meet perceived family responsibility. In addition, Anita's main teacher gave rewards for behaviours associated with mastery goals, such as asking thoughtful questions, and so demonstrating mastery behaviours became a way of attaining rewards (and meeting extrinsic goals) which in turn served to attain parental approval. Anita's desire for high performance was also influenced by high parental value of education and academic achievement. Anita

struggled with developing peer relationships and despite her efforts was unable to build the friendships she initially hoped for. Unresolved relationship goals strengthened academic mastery and performance goals as she explained.

“Well at the beginning of this year I had a goal that I would make new friends ... but actually this year there were not many people I could make friends with ... but my goal of achievement is always what I have ... so I just focus on that.”(Anita)

Initially Sophia wanted to achieve “good marks” and to understand her work. As this goal became increasingly unattainable she described how unresolved academic goals lead to a focus on a desire for belonging with a particular peer group. She reflected on how her reasons for wanting to achieve at school had changed during the year.

“I used to think grades were the most important thing. I thought I was going to get As and I got Bs and Cs and Ds and Es, I haven’t got an A. So I just felt like, well there’s other people that got Ds why don’t I just go and talk to them about it instead of talking to the people who got As and Bs and making me feel bad about it ... and then I just felt like oh, this is good why don’t I just hang out with a bunch of people that feel like this and then socializing became my main objective to do in school ... so my friends are much more important to me now than my schoolwork.”(Sophia)

Thus, unattainable performance goals lead to an emphasis on relationship goals which became the driving force behind Sophia’s level of academic achievement. Instead of striving for higher performance, she described a work avoidance goal which enabled her to maintain peer relationships. Her case illustrates how when initial goals are unattainable, other goals emerge and take prominence.

Unrealised academic goals also lead to goal changes for Natalie. Like Sophia, at the start of the year she stated a goal to achieve good marks. Instead of maintaining satisfactory performance however, Natalie experienced punishments for incomplete work and consequently spoke about “*trying not to get into trouble*”, and to “*just do my work and not get yelled at*”. So in Natalie’s case failing to meet performance goals resulted in pursuit of work avoidance and extrinsic avoidance goals.

For these three students, changes in articulated goals related to unattainable initial goals. When social goals are unmet, academic goals may be strengthened. When adaptive academic goals (such as mastery goals) are unachievable students may switch to less adaptive academic goals (such as work avoidance) and /or social goals. In each case however, it must be acknowledged that goals have the potential to be dynamic and reciprocal and experiences may act as catalysts for goal changes.

Interestingly, at the end of the year all students described the importance of extrinsic goals to either achieve rewards or to avoid punishment. The explanations of why this was important to students related directly to instructional practices at the school and so emphasises the role of context in shaping and influences students goals in learning environments.

5. Discussion

Students pursue multiple goals in learning contexts (Boekaerts, de Koning, & Vedder, 2006; Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985; Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1992; Wosnitza & Volet, 2009). Some goals reflect academic reasons for wanting to achieve and others reflect related social or extrinsic reasons. This empirical study

provides in-depth exploration of the multiple goals pursued by a group of students during an academic year and explores relationships between the goals students describe.

The key finding of this study is that in real learning situations, students' academic, social and extrinsic goals are interconnected. For example, academic goals of mastery and performance are associated when students strive to learn and improve in order to achieve good marks. Academic and social goals are associated when students aim to do the minimum amount of schoolwork (work avoidance goals) so as to have more time to pursue friendships (relationships goals). Extrinsic goals and performance goals are associated when students aim to attain rewards through high academic performance. Although most of these relationships reflect academic → social hierarchies (Wentzel, 2000), the data shows goals within domains to be related, i.e. academic goals (mastery and performance) and social goals (approval and responsibility). So, within an academic → social hierarchy there are 'layers' of related goals. Furthermore, there is some evidence that causality can also be social → academic when, as in the case of Anita, social goals (to assist others) reinforce academic goals (to improve understanding). Addressing the issue of causality is important for future research design and methodology as causality could be inferred by the nature of the questions asked which may emphasise academic reasons for achievement. While this study shows that academic, social and extrinsic goals are related in supportive and converging ways, more understandings are needed about how these goals are related hierarchically.

This study also provides some evidence that goals may be reciprocal in nature. While associations from academic to social goals and between some social goals are shown, there is some indication that these associations may be reciprocal or bi-directional. So while mastery goals may be associated with performance goals (e.g. I want to understand and improve my work and only if I do this will I get high marks), performance goals may also inform mastery goals (to get high marks I need to understand and improve my work). Likewise approval

goals may inform responsibility goals and vice versa, particularly for students who are concerned about parental approval and family responsibility. This study affirms claims that examining the reciprocity of goals in academic and social domains needs further research (L. H. Anderman, 1999a).

The finding that goals are related supports other literature exploring relationships between goals. Mastery goals have been shown to have a positive association with social goals such as responsibility and relationships (L. H. Anderman, 1999a; Levy-Tossman, Kaplan, & Assor, 2007), and a strong association has been established between performance, friendship and goals for status within the peer group (L. H. Anderman, 1999a). Relationships between mastery and performance goals have been established (Pintrich, 2000) through quantitative measures. This empirical study supports these findings by providing qualitative evidence of the relationships between mastery goals, performance goals and social goals and by arguing that goals are not pursued in isolation, but rather as critical components of complex yet integrated systems of goals operating in authentic contexts.

Furthermore, the goals described by the students in this study include work avoidance (Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985) and extrinsic goals (Patrick, Ryan, & Pintrich, 1999). These goals have received less research attention than achievement or social goals, yet the data from this study suggests that they are relevant to student motivation. In addition, work avoidance and extrinsic goals are related to academic and social goals, and moreover may emerge when students switch goals. For example, when students are unable to attain high marks they may aim to do as little work as possible. Therefore, disregarding work avoidance and extrinsic goals in future studies may limit the development of holistic views of students' motivation.

The interconnectedness of academic and social goals shown by this study reinforces the importance of social goals in the formation and pursuit of academic goals (Dowson & McInerney, 2001; Urdan & Maehr, 1995). Much research focuses exclusively on achievement goals or social goals and the question of how different types of goals may interact is still being explored. The results from this study suggest to fully understand pursuit of particular academic or achievement goals, understanding how they interact with social goals is paramount. By considering academic and social goals as equal parts of a whole there is potential to develop goal theory to reflect the complexity of goals in real learning contexts.

The finding that goals can be both stable and dynamic (Fryer & Elliot, 2007) is also important in this study. Some goals such as mastery goals remained stable for particular students throughout the year while other goals appeared to subside (i.e. performance goals), making way for other goals, such as work avoidance and relationship goals. Students showed capacity to switch or intensify goals (Senko & Harackiewicz, 2005) based on their perceived immediate and future attainability. What is also interesting here is the relative stability of mastery goals as compared to performance goals, which, when unattainable seemed to lead to a switch to work avoidance goals. Some students seemed to take the view that 'If I can't get the marks I'm expecting I'll just do as little work as possible'. Further investigation of the stability and/or dynamic nature of students' spontaneously articulated goals over a longer period of time would be valuable to further develop understandings.

If single goals are part of larger complex systems and if they may be reciprocal, stable or dynamic then investigating this requires the sustained use of qualitative and mixed-method studies. For example, using a wider variety of methods of data collection including self-report forms (interviews, diary entries, specific task-focused reflections) complemented by observations of students' behaviour will help elucidate how perceived goals are enacted and shed light on how events and experiences influence goal pursuit. The clear value of

qualitative research in this field is allowing the unpacking of ‘layers’ of inter-related goals as in this study. Students connected goals in their discussion and thus highlights the value of researchers doing the same. If researchers continue to think of goals as separate entities then we are perhaps missing opportunities to investigate further how goals ‘play out’ for individuals in real learning contexts.

This study is limited by its small sample size and exclusive use of interviews to gather data. While there are certain advantages of using interviews in this study, such as allowing participants to describe in their own words and to explain why they hold particular beliefs, enabling an in-depth, holistic view of students’ goals to be developed, the key limitation is exclusive reliance on self-reports. Even so, the study clearly indicates students pursue multiple goals simultaneously and that relationships exist between academic, social and extrinsic goals. Findings that goals may be stable, dynamic and reciprocal extends the current literature which has largely conceived goals in isolation, rather than as complex inter-related systems which influence motivation in real learning contexts. Future research should continue to explore goals as dynamic and reciprocal and look to longitudinal studies to further investigate how and why goals may change over time. Studies using multiple and complementary methods to examine students’ articulated goals, their actual achievement behaviour in learning contexts, and contextual affordances and constraints, will enable further understandings about the formation and management of multiple goals in authentic learning contexts to be developed.

APPENDIX A. Interview schedule sample

Interview	Schedule of interview questions related to research questions (<i>RQ</i>)
1 – February (Orientation)	What hopes do you have for the year? What do you hope to achieve? (<i>RQ1</i>)
2 – March (Introduction to goals)	Do you want to do well at school? Why? Why not? (<i>RQ1</i>) Probe: Why is it important to you that you ... (from previous answer) What other things are important for you at school? Why? (<i>RQ1</i>) Does having friends at school help your achievement? Why/Why not? (<i>RQ2</i>)
3 – April (Influences on goals)	What things have been most important for you at school so far this year? Why? (<i>RQ1</i>) Are these the same as the things that were important to you last year? Why/Why not? (<i>RQ3</i>)
4 – May (Goal activity)	Do you want to do well at school? Why? Why not? (<i>RQ1</i>) I've got a set of cards here that contain statements about why some students might want to do well at school. I'm going to show you the cards in groups of three and I'd like you to take the cards that contain statements you agree with. (After each group probe – why have you chosen that/those cards? Can you explain why this statement is important to you?) (<i>RQ1 and 2</i>)
5 – June	At the beginning of the year (March) you said that you wanted to do

(Revisiting goals)	<p>well at school because ... is that still the case? Why/ why not? (<i>RQ3</i>)</p> <p>Have your ideas about your achievement changed at all? If so, How? (<i>RQ3</i>)</p> <p>What else is important to you at school at the moment? (<i>RQ1 and 2</i>)</p> <p>What kinds of things make you feel motivated to do well at school? (<i>RQ1</i>)</p>
6 – July (Reflections on semester 1 achievement)	<p>How do you feel about how you've gone in school this semester?</p> <p>Why? Have you achieved what you wanted to? Why/why not? (<i>RQ1 and 2</i>)</p> <p>Have you made any plans to do anything differently to change your results in the future? (<i>RQ3</i>)</p>
7 – September (Clarification and changes of goals)	<p>What does the word 'goal' mean to you?</p> <p>Some people talk about goals at school as being the purposes or reasons for wanting to achieve. For what reasons do you want to achieve at school? (<i>RQ1</i>)</p> <p>Some people talk about having different sorts of goals, like goals to do with school work and goals to do with the more social side of school.</p> <p>Do you have goals that are specifically to do with your schoolwork?</p> <p>Why are these important to you? (<i>RQ1</i>)</p> <p>Do you have goals that are more related to the social side of being at school? Why are these important to you? (<i>RQ1</i>)</p>

	Do you think you have the same goals now as you had at the beginning of year? What has changed? Why? (RQ3)
8 – November (Reflections on the year)	At the beginning of the year you hoped that ... how do you feel about that now? (RQ3) Earlier in the year when we did the activity with the statements you strongly agreed that ... were important to you. Do you still feel this way? Why? Why not? (RQ3)

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TABLE 1. Goal Statements used in Interview Four

Goals	Goal statements
Mastery goals	I work hard at school because I am interested in what I am learning.
Performance goals	I work hard at school so I can get good marks.
Work avoidance goals	At school I do the work I need to do to get by.
Extrinsic goals	I work hard at school so I can achieve rewards. (approach) I work hard at school so I don't get into trouble. (avoidance)
Relationship goals	I want to do well at school to keep up with my friends.
Approval goals	I want to do well at school to please my parents, teachers or friends.
Responsibility goals	I want to do well at school because other people expect me to do well.
Status goals	I want to do well at school so I can get a good job and improve my future opportunities.
Concern goals	I want to do well at school so others can learn things from me if they ask.

TABLE 2. Coding categories of goals.

Goals	Definition
Extrinsic goals	wanting to achieve academically to obtain rewards for academic effort or to avoid undesirable consequences such as punishment for poor behaviour or achievement.
Academic goals	
Mastery goals	wanting to achieve academically to demonstrate understanding, academic competence, or improved performance relative to self-established standards.
Performance goals	wanting to achieve academically to demonstrate ability, outperform other students and attain certain grades/marks.
Work avoidance goals	wanting to achieve academically with a minimum amount of effort and/or avoiding demanding achievement situations to minimise expended effort.
Social goals	

Relationship goals	wanting to achieve academically to enhance a sense of belonging to a group, or groups, and/or to build or maintain inter-personal relationships.
Responsibility goals	wanting to achieve academically out of a sense of responsibility to others, or to meet social role obligations, or to follow social and moral 'rules'.
Approval goals	wanting to achieve academically to gain approval or validation from teachers, peers and/or parents.
Status goals	wanting to achieve academically to maintain/attain social position in school and/or later life.
Concern goals	wanting to achieve academically to be able to assist others in their academic or personal development.

TABLE 3. The range of goals pursued by students

Goals	Supporting comment	Frequency (%)
Mastery	<p><i>“I’m really interested in lots of things</i></p> <p><i>and I want to understand lots of things ...</i></p> <p><i>and it makes me feel very good when I</i></p> <p><i>learn new things ... you get this warm feeling</i></p> <p><i>that says I can do it.” (Jeremy)</i></p>	14%
Performance	<p><i>“I want to achieve more than other people</i></p> <p><i>in the class and I want to be the highest to</i></p> <p><i>get good marks in the class... it matters about</i></p> <p><i>getting full marks in everything.” (Anita)</i></p> <p><i>“I want to get really good marks.” (Stephanie)</i></p>	20%
Work Avoidance	<p><i>“I like doing well when the work is easy...I</i></p> <p><i>just do what I have to do to get by ...</i></p> <p><i>so it’s done and it’s okay” (Natalie)</i></p>	8%
Extrinsic	<p><i>“It’s important to do your work okay then</i></p> <p><i>you won’t get into trouble.” (Brett)</i></p>	20%

*“I’m trying to do my best work so that I might
get a reward.” (Stephanie)*

Relationship	<i>“I want to do well so that I won’t be left out with my friends.” (Jessica)</i>	13%
Approval	<i>“I want to achieve good marks so my parents will be proud of me.” (Anita)</i>	10%
Responsibility	<i>“I want to do well because they (my parents) expect me to do my best.” (Jeremy)</i>	3%
Status	<i>“If I do well at school then it will be good for my future, for university and for my career.” (Anita)</i>	7%
Concern	<i>“I want to do well so then I can help others with their work.” (Anita)</i>	5%

